

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE UPDATE

August 2, 2002

The U. S. Congress has passed the supplemental appropriations bill for 2002. This bill allocated \$15 million to APHIS for TSE work and \$2 million to ARS for TSE research. APHIS is currently waiting on the OMB to advise them how to disperse this funding to the states.

In the current Department of Homeland Security legislation, APHIS is not transferred in whole to the new department as was proposed initially. Under the most recent proposal, only the Border Inspection Division and the Plum Island Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory would be moved to the new Department of Homeland Security.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife has passed a regulation controlling the movement of deer and elk carcasses from their CWD endemic area. The regulation prohibits the removal of any dead deer or elk from their endemic area except 1) meat that is cut and wrapped, 2) quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached, 3) meat that has been boned out, 4) hides with no head attached, 5) clean [no meat or tissue attached] skull plates with antlers attached, 6) antlers with no meat or tissue attached, 7) upper canine teeth, also known as “buglers” “whistlers” or “ivories” and 8) finished taxidermied heads. The regulation also prohibits the importation of dead deer or elk from any other state or country from a game management unit, or equivalent wildlife management unit, as defined by that state or country, which has been diagnosed as positive for CWD in the wild, with the same exceptions.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has banned the import of deer and elk carcasses from out-of-state (not only CWD states, but all states). Only deboned meat, antlers attached to cleaned skull caps, antlers, upper canine teeth or heads mounted by a taxidermist may be imported into Illinois. Additionally, baiting and feeding of deer has been banned in Illinois. In cooperation with the Illinois Department of Agriculture, the importation of domestic cervids is only allowed from facilities that have been monitoring for CWD for a minimum of 5 years and are certified CWD free by the state of origin.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has banned the import of all live deer and elk into that state. This ban affects approximately 700 deer farmers and 90 elk farmers statewide.

Additional information on the three men who died from a brain disease in Wisconsin casts doubt on the story that they all died from CWD related illness. Two of the men died in 1993, one from classic CJD and one from Pick’s disease, another fatal brain disease not related to TSE. The third died from CJD in 1999. All three had participated in a “wild game” feed at one of the men’s cabins but not evidence puts all three at the same feed the same year. The feeds were conducted from the late 1980 to the early 1990s. Their deaths were not attributed to CWD until CWD was found in Wisconsin deer (9 years after the first two deaths). Also, two of the men were in the meat business, one made dog food from processed meat and bone meal and another was in the cattle business and furnished beef at the game feeds also. A medical doctor in the area stated that he is more concerned that an unknown case of BSE (mad cow) may have been in some of the beef than he is that CWD caused the deaths. The Center for Disease Control is investigating these cases, as they do all CJD deaths.

Elk farmers in Saskatchewan are threatening to turn their elk loose because an extended drought has caused them to run out of feed for their animals. They claim that the Canadian government's handling of CWD is to blame for them not being able to sell and ship their elk, so they may just turn them loose to fend for themselves, rather than spending money on hay to feed them.

The elk farmers who were bought out by USDA-APHIS in the Colorado endemic area are now threatening to sue the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Colorado Department of Agriculture for loss of income from their elk facilities. This after they were paid for their depopulated animals by USDA-APHIS. This may cause problems with the proposed buy-out in the Nebraska endemic area.

The CWD Symposium in Denver during the week of August 5th has reached the capacity of the hotel for attendees. Over 450 people have registered with several dozen more turned down due to the capacity of the meeting room. Discussions have begun to determine if an additional symposium in the eastern part of the country need to be convened soon.